the Orator

Volume 2, Issue 3
Spring 2011

Government of Alberta

A Publication of Alberta's Ministry of Aboriginal Relations

Alberta hosts National Aboriginal Achievement Awards

NAAF

The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation was established in 1984. It promotes the overall development, education and professional advancement of Aboriginal people in Canadian society.

The Alberta government was a proud sponsor of the 2011 National Aboriginal Achievement Awards held March 11, at the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium in Edmonton.

Now in their 18th year, the Awards celebrate the achievements of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada. Each year, the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation presents 14 awards to honour achievement in areas such as health, law, political science, culture, arts, business and education. The Awards also include special categories for outstanding youth and lifetime achievement.

The 2011 Awards mark the third time the Awards have been held in Edmonton and the fifth time in Alberta. Among this year's recipients were Audrey Poitras, long-serving President of the Métis Nation of Alberta Association and Joseph Dion, President and CEO of Frog Lake Energy Resources. Ms. Poitras was recognized for her many contributions in Politics while Mr. Dion, a former Grand Chief of Treaty 8, was honoured for his noteworthy accomplishments in Business and Commerce.

▲ L to R: National Chief Betty Ann Lavallee (National Congress of Aboriginal Peoples); Dr. Marcia Anderson DeCoteau (NAAA in Health winner); Minister Len Webber

Premier Ed Stelmach joined the festivities to bring greetings and present the NAAA in Education to Dr. Margo Greenwood.

Len Webber, Minister of Aboriginal Relations was also on hand to co-present the NAAA in Health to Dr. Marcia Anderson Decoteau, an assistant professor at the University of Manitoba, who at age 24 was the youngest-ever Aboriginal person to graduate from a Canadian medical school. "This event draws attention to the many achievements of Aboriginal people in Alberta and across Canada," said Minister Webber. "It's good to see so many people come out to celebrate these outstanding role models."

Want to learn more?

For more information on the Awards and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, visit: www.naaf.ca

Webber promotes Aboriginal contributions

◀ Left: Minister Webber addresses the gathering at the Louis Riel Commemoration hosted by the Métis Nation of Alberta Association on November 16, 2010.

◀ Right: In October, Minister Webber gave the keynote address at the Calgary Chamber of Commerce's "Doing Business on Reserve" event. He spoke about Alberta's strategic approach for encouraging Aboriginal participation in the economy and answered questions from the audience.

Governments champion Aboriginal education

L to R: MOU leaders Chief Cameron Alexis (Alexis First Nation), Minister Len Webber; Treaty 6 Grand Chief Ernest Gadwa; John Duncan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development); Minister Dave Hancock; Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey; Treaty 7 Grand Chief Charles Weaselhead; Chief Rose Laboucan (Driftpile First Nation and Treaty 8 Education Chief) at their January 24 meeting.

Education is the foundation for embracing a lifetime of social, economic and other opportunities. Together with other Ministries, Aboriginal Relations works with Aboriginal leaders, communities and the federal government on initiatives to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit student achievement.

FNMI Partnership Council

The First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Partnership Council was established in October 2009 and has been working since to guide the future direction of FNMI education in Alberta.

At their most recent meeting on March 16, Council members heard an update from the Partnership Council working group regarding progress on implementing the Year 1 Action Plan. Work under the Plan continues to focus on ensuring that Aboriginal students are ready and able to learn; improving teacher training; and engaging parents and families to support Aboriginal children and youth.

MOU on First Nations Education

Signed in February 2010, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on First Nations Education seeks to improve education outcomes for First Nations students. It is a long-term framework for collaboration among the three parties (federal-provincial-First Nations) to address a range of education-related issues, including parental and community engagement, Treaty and cultural awareness, and on-going work on tuition and education service agreements.

Thanks to a strong commitment among the parties, there has been significant progress under the MOU, including creation of the First Nations Education Circle and a work plan for establishing an Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre (IKWC).

Elected officials met in Edmonton January 24, 2011 where they approved a comprehensive implementation framework that will guide work under the MOU over the next 10 years. Four subtables have begun work on the Knowledge and Wisdom Centre as well as a funding analysis, tuition agreements and developing a data protocol.

Aboriginal Relations Minister Len Webber stressed the importance of taking a future-focused view. "We have a lot of work to do and we know this will be a long-term process," said Webber. "But our joint efforts will have long-lasting and far-ranging benefits, especially for children and youth."

First Nations Development Fund Annual Results 2009/2010

In 2009/2010, FNDF provided over $104 million to First Nations to support economic, social and community development projects. The FNDF Grant Program Annual Results 2009/2010 highlights six of over 200 success stories made possible with FNDF funding support. To view a copy of the report, visit : www.aboriginal.alberta.ca

Métis Week celebrated in Alberta

November 15-21, 2010 was Métis Week in Alberta. The celebration, which takes place annually in the third week of November, recognizes the culture and contributions of Métis people in Alberta and Canada.

This year was an especially important occasion with November 16th marking the 125th anniversary of Louis Riel's death. Métis Nation of Alberta Association (MNAA) hosted a tribute to Louis Riel at the Alberta Legislature. Len Webber, Minister of Aboriginal Relations attended the ceremony where he spoke of the contributions Métis people have made to the development of the province.

Other activities around the province included the Delia Gray Memorial Gala, Métis flag-raising ceremonies, open houses, and talent shows.

MNAA President Audrey Poitras and Minister Len Webber.

Students embrace science and technology camps

Building confidence among Aboriginal youth

IGNITE camps are an opportunity for Aboriginal youth to build confidence in their technical abilities and learn more about opportunities in engineering, computer science and technology.

In partnership with IBM Canada, Aboriginal Relations was at Elizabeth Metis Settlement November 23-25 delivering an IGNITE (Igniting Interest in Science and Technology) camp to 18 enthusiastic sixth-graders.

Through IGNITE, the students took a hands-on approach to science and completed daily projects such as making ice cream, building radios and programming robots. The camp wrapped up with an open house where students showed off their projects. The positive impact on the young people is evident in their comments.

As student Samantha Jackson enthusiastically observed, "These robots are the coolest thing ever! I want to be a scientist so I can do this every day!"

Samantha's father Rick was equally impressed. "I'm glad my daughter could take part in this program. She's been excited for school all week and you can see she's very proud of what she's learned."

Elizabeth was the final school to host the pilot program. There have also been IGNITE camps in the communities of Enoch First Nation and Peavine and Fishing Lake Metis Settlements. In coming months, the pilot project will be assessed to determine possible continuation.

IGNITE Pilot Project Quick Facts

- Four camps delivered over twelve days
- Involved 53 students, six teachers and/or teaching assistants, and four Aboriginal Relations staff members
- All camps were very well received in the pilot communities

Samantha and father Rick test the robot she built.

Protocol Agreement: Moving in positive directions

The Premier, the Minister of Aboriginal Relations, and the Grand Chiefs and Vice-Chiefs of Treaties 6, 7, and 8 signed the Protocol Agreement on Government-to-Government Relations on May 22, 2008. Since that historic day, government leaders have met several times to build relationships and discuss issues of mutual concern.

At the November 30, 2010 meeting under the Protocol Agreement, the Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister of Alberta Children and Youth Services, and the Chiefs in attendance confirmed their commitment to the development of an MOU to address issues affecting First Nations children and youth.

The most recent meeting on March 21, 2011 saw the Honourable Len Webber, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Grand Chief Charles Weaselhead co-chairing the proceedings in Edmonton. The main agenda item was the Alberta government's Consultation Policy review and a process for engaging First Nations in a short-term dialogue on the review.

▲ Meeting Co-Chairs Treaty 7 Grand Chief Charles Weaselhead with Minister Webber

Following in-depth discussions, leaders agreed to revitalize the consultation sub-table so that officials and technicians from First Nations and the Alberta government can work jointly to address several issues in the coming weeks.

To view the Protocol Agreement on Government-to-Government Relations, visit: www.aboriginal.alberta.ca/532.cfm

First Nations Consultation Policy Review: Next Steps

The Alberta government is continuing its review of Alberta's First Nations Consultation Policy on Land Management and Resource Development. The Policy ensures resource development is done in a way that respects Treaty rights, while creating a more confident business environment for industry. The review process has included over a year of gathering input from First Nations, industry and municipalities. These groups have also submitted position papers sharing their views on First Nations consultation.

The Alberta government is now engaging First Nations in a time-limited, focused dialogue that will enable leaders to share recommendations on several key issues at the third annual meeting of Grand Chiefs, Chiefs and the Premier in summer 2011.

New Metis Settlements Ombudsman Appointed

▲ Metis Settlements Ombudsman, Harley Johnson

On November 5, 2010, Harley Johnson became Alberta's fourth Metis Settlements Ombudsman. Appointed by Aboriginal Relations Minister Len Webber, Johnson is leading the independent office.

"Mr. Johnson brings a wealth of experience to this role. He was the first Metis Settlements Ombudsman and helped establish the first MSO office," said Aboriginal Relations Minister Len Webber. "The Ombudsman ensures Metis Settlement members have a proven, effective way to voice their concerns."

Johnson served as the province's Ombudsman from 1990-1997. His previous experience as Metis Settlements Ombudsman from 2003-2007 and 25 years with Calgary Police Services will also be an asset to the office.

Under the authority of the Metis Settlements Act, the Minister of Aboriginal Relations appoints an MSO who investigates concerns Metis Settlement members may have about the management or leadership of a Metis Settlement.

The MSO addresses complaints within two categories: administrative fairness (how the Council, staff, members and other entities deal with each other in their daily business) and conflict of interest (fairness, integrity and impartiality of decision making). For more information on the Metis Settlements Ombudsman, visit http://www.metisombudsman.ab.ca/.

Working with Fort Chip

The Government of Alberta continues to work with First Nations and Métis leadership of Fort Chipewyan to help address concerns raised in the community. Government has acknowledged the concerns of Fort Chipewyan residents, and has been taking action to help find solutions.

Working with
Fort
Chipewyan

Visit our website to learn more: www.aboriginal.alberta.ca.

2010-2014 Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal Appointed

Members of the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal (MSAT) were appointed by the Honourable Len Webber, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and the Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC) effective December 3, 2010.

"The Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal is an extremely important accountability component for Métis Settlements," said Webber. "Each member brings something valuable to the table and I commend them for taking on this vital role."

The seven Tribunal positions are appointed every four years. Following a joint Alberta/MSGC publicly posted recruitment process, the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and the Metis Settlements General Council each appoint a Vice-Chair and two members and the Minister appoints the Chair from a list of nominees submitted by the MSGC.

The members of the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal are:

- Don Cunningham, Chair (returning)
- Allan Lamouche, Vice-Chair (returning)
- Wayne Cardinal, Vice-Chair (new)
- David Drummond, Member (new)
- Peter Bowal, Member (new)
- Dorothy Anderson, Member (returning)
- Joyce Parteneau, Member (new)

The Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal was established in 1990 under the Metis Settlements Act to resolve land, membership and surface access disputes.

For more information on the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal, visit http://www.msat.gov.ab.ca.

Get in touch with us:
Aboriginal Relations
Communications Branch
780-422-2462

The Orator is also available online as a PDF document at www.aboriginal.alberta.ca
ISSN 1920-3381 PRINT
ISSN 1920-339X WEB

Alberta